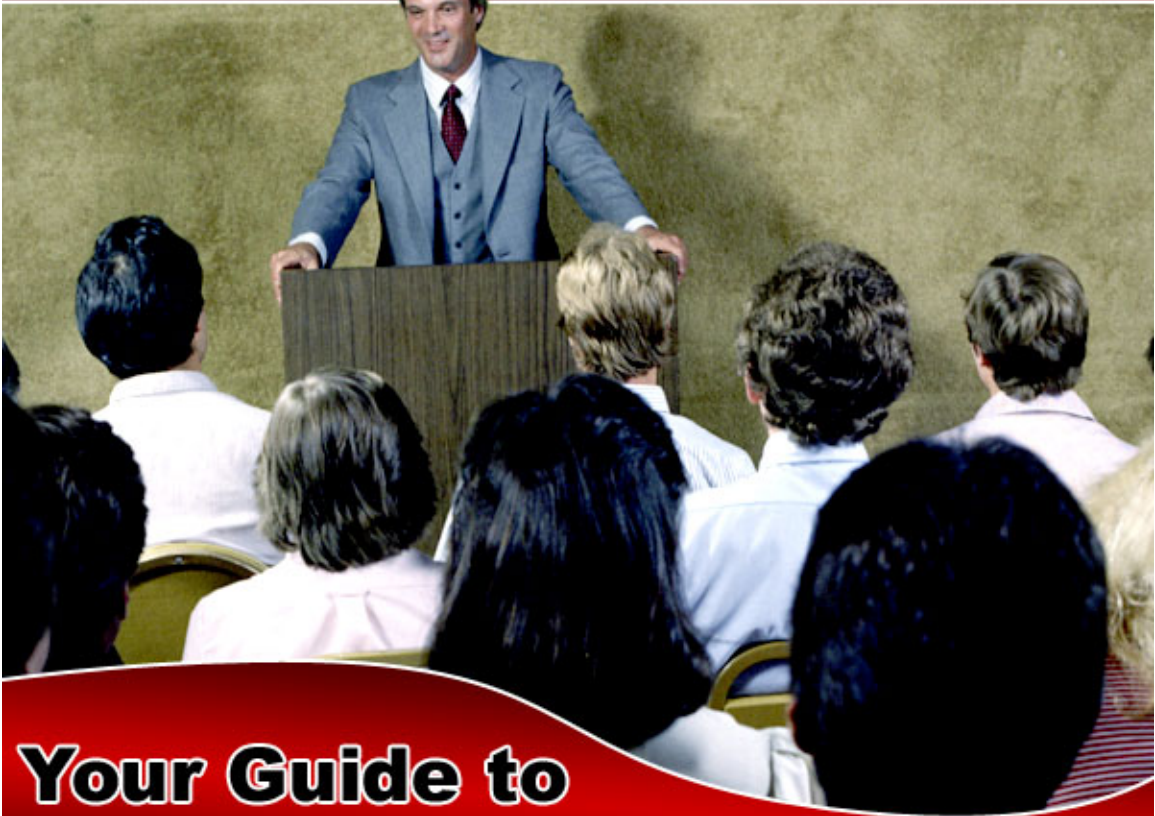


**FROM**  
*Tongue Tied*  
**TO**  
**Articulate**



**Your Guide to  
Successful Public Speaking**

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## Why Public Speaking is Scary

If you're going to stand up and speak in front of a roomful of people, you are probably going to be nervous. If you're not, it means that you're either a very experienced public speaker, not fully aware of the speaking situation, or just plain out of it.

So why does just the thought of speaking in public make so many people nauseous?

It's natural to want to make a positive impression on other people. People go to great lengths to make a good impression on others, from taking classes in speech, manners, and presentation skills to shopping for the right outfits and even undergoing plastic surgery. Billions of dollars are spent every year on products and services to help us look and sound better in front of our peers. And to make things worse, the media is constantly featuring attractive people who look and sound remarkably at ease in front of the camera.

Speaking in public emphasizes those feelings of wanting to make a good impression. We feel our own insecurities being magnified, and we are keenly aware of being judged. In addition, we want to sound intelligent, poised, and professional as we definitely don't want to make fools of ourselves. With all of that at stake, it's no wonder we are so scared of speaking in public.

But yet, thousands of people get up and speak in front of others every day. How is that possible if we have so much to lose? It's easy to do—simply change your way of thinking. Of course, that's easier said than done. However, if you change your attitude from “What if I make a fool of myself?” to “What if I really do well?” you're already on the right path to a more positive mindset. It's amazing how many people will dwell on the potential negative scenarios in contrast to how few will visualize people walking up to them after their speech or presentation and saying, “Nice job” or “I really enjoyed your talk.” The thought of impending disaster overshadows the potential positive feeling of a job well done. If a baseball player visualized striking out more often than rounding the bases, he probably never would have stuck with the sport. Why not put the same positive imagery to work for yourself?

If you stop and think about it, you'll probably find that 99 percent of the public speaking engagements that you have been to have gone just fine. The question isn't whether the speakers were great orators, but simply how many met with disaster. For the vast majority of speakers, their clothes didn't suddenly fall off, birds didn't swoop down and take away their notes, and they didn't forget their speech (and even if a speaker missed a line or two, or ten, chances are you didn't even know it). It's safe to say that you probably cannot remember a real public speaking disaster that you've seen.

The key to successful public speaking is preparation. If you are confident that you know your material and can clearly explain it to the mirror or to a friend or colleague, then most likely you are ready to speak. At that point, the number of people watching or listening

should not matter. Your presentation is ready, and you're ready. The audience will enjoy, appreciate, be entertained by, or be educated by what you have to say. And, if not, that's no longer your concern—you've done your part. You cannot control your surroundings, but once you are well prepared and have rehearsed, you can get up there and speak with confidence.

We tend to think that the audience is 100 percent focused on how we look and what we have to say. But the truth is that unless you're giving the State of the Union address or accepting an Academy Award, all eyes and ears typically do not remain on you as you speak. In fact, surveys have shown that audience members usually remember very little of a speech or presentation. At least a few of the people in the front rows have to go to the bathroom and are wondering how they can get out without being noticed. A good number of the people in the middle rows are half listening and half daydreaming, while the people in the back rows can't see you very well and are busy studying the people in the seats around them. So, in other words, no one is 100 percent focused on you. If, in fact, you do so well up there as to make them forget their other concerns, then you have succeeded beyond your wildest hopes. If not, you've simply succeeded in delivering your message.

The old saying "You are your own worst critic" is especially appropriate when it comes to public speaking. It is mainly what is going on in our own minds that make us so nervous about speaking in public.

It is well known that many famous speakers and performers such as Winston Churchill and Carly Simon had stage fright. Yet they rose to the occasion and channeled that fear in a way that helped them give a stellar speech or performance. You too can channel your nervous energy through positive imagery and think, "I'm going to wow them."

## CHAPTER 2

# Learn to Relax

It's been said that the only thing scarier than death is speaking in public. But it doesn't have to be that way. This book is designed to give you the basic information needed so that you will feel more confident and comfortable when speaking in public. The goal of this book is to help you overcome your fear by first learning how to relax, prepare, and practice.

You've probably heard it many, many times before, but the suggestion that you should picture the audience naked does actually have some value. You're standing vulnerable before them—feeling naked, in a way—so imagining them literally naked can make things feel a little more equal. True confidence, however, comes not from how you picture them but from how much you believe in yourself, what you have to say, and how you present it.

To get you started on the right track, the next several pages present some exercises and techniques to help you relax, prepare, and practice.

**Relaxation** will help you eliminate negative energy and open the door to positive visualization and positive energy. Instead of harboring your stress, your mind and body will focus on the task at hand - communicating.

**Preparation** is the cornerstone to speaking success. Researching, planning, and organizing will make your job that much easier. You will have more confidence if you are properly prepared to speak.

**Practice** may not make you perfect, but it will help you eliminate mistakes and familiarize yourself with the material. It will also help you hone your communication skills. Practice also provides a time to experiment.

Of course it won't come all together with one session in front of the mirror, but in time, using some or all of the techniques listed, you can start the process that will improve your public speaking abilities.

The type of speaking you are preparing to do is somewhat irrelevant at the initial practice stage. Later you will refine your skills with more specific types of speaking engagements in mind. For now, you just want to get comfortable with the general idea of speaking in front of other people—being seen, being heard, and connecting with your audience.

## **AN IMPORTANT STEP**

First of all, you need to tell yourself, “There is no reason to be afraid of speaking in public!”

People speak in public every day—in front of business colleagues, friends, family members and large audiences of strangers. They do it, they survive, and more often than not they feel very good about having spoken.

## **WHERE TO START**

A quiet, relaxing place, with minimal distractions, will allow you to focus on the initial relaxation and breathing exercises. It will also allow you to close your eyes and visualize, as well as to gather your thoughts as you structure and build your presentation.

After you have been practicing for a while, it is beneficial to find a place where you can set up a video camera to tape yourself. Later, shift to a noisier place, since there are usually distractions around you when you speak in a public setting. Finally, look for someplace that resembles the setting in which you will be speaking.

## **A FEW THINGS TO ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND**

As you set off on the road to more comfortable, polished public speaking, you should take with you ten tidbits of advice that will serve you well:

1. If you’re worried about speaking in public, know that you’re not alone.
2. You don’t appear as nervous as you think you do—most people can’t even tell.
3. The audience is usually on your side. They want you to succeed.
4. It’s okay to express vulnerability—in fact, it’s typically well received.
5. You don’t have to be perfect. If you mess up or make a mistake, just keep on going.
6. Set time aside to prepare.
7. Set time aside to practice.
8. Don’t forget to breathe when you speak.
9. Remember to make eye contact with your audience.
10. Try to have fun!

Remember, most people are scared when it comes to public speaking. With that in mind, try to muster up all of your nervous energy and just do it. Once you step away from the microphone and one person walks up to you afterward and tells you that he or she benefited from what you had to say, you'll no longer feel like a scaredy cat—you'll feel like a great speaker.

## ***Basic Relaxation Exercises***

Relaxation exercises come in handy whenever you feel stress about speaking in public, whether you are preparing to speak in a month or going onstage that evening. The following sequence of relaxation exercises is a simple way to calm your nerves.

### **RELAXATION**

- Stand comfortably, arms at your side, and take several deep breaths (wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing).
- Feel the air as you release each breath. You can close your eyes if you like.
- Breathe at a normal rate and allow your body to relax.

### **HANG YOUR HEAD**

- Let your head hang down with your chin touching or nearly touching your chest.
- Drop those shoulders too!

### **ROLL IT**

- Gently and slowly roll your head in a circular motion several times.
- Stop and let your head hang limp again.
- Slowly lift your head up, breathe deeply three or four times, and open your eyes.

### **FACERCIZE**

- Tense the muscles of your head and face. Clench your teeth and tighten your jaw, stretch your cheeks, and scrunch your brow.

- Now relax your facial muscles one by one.
- Slowly (so that you don't hurt your neck) let your head slump down to your chest.
- Sit for a few minutes and enjoy the relaxed feeling.

### **STRETCHING OUT**

- Sit comfortably, arms at your sides, in a straight-backed chair and stretch your legs out in front of you. Keep your legs relaxed.
- Lift your arms slowly and stretch them out in front of you.

### **TIGHTENING**

- Tighten your arm muscles and point your hands straight out.
- Tighten your leg muscles and point your toes straight out.

### **LETTING GO**

- With your arms still tensed and extended, turn your right wrist and hand back and forth as if you were turning a doorknob, trying hard to open a door. Tighten those fingers around the doorknob. Do it several times.
- Count down from three: three, two, one. When you reach one, keep your right arm tense but let your hand drop and your fingers hang limply. Then let your arm drop limply.
- Now do the same with the other hand, fingers, and arm.

### **BASIC DEEP BREATHING RELAXATION EXERCISE**

Many athletes and performers use this simple means of breathing properly to relax before a competition or performance. You can use it to reduce stress before you speak, thus allowing you to focus better on the task at hand.

- Preferably standing (but this can also be done if you are sitting) with your shoulders straight, take a very deep breath through your nose. Hold it for ten seconds and then release it with force through the mouth. Feel your stomach expand as you inhale and contract as you exhale.
- Repeat three or four times.

## ***Visualization***

Visualization is a tool that can help you relax almost anywhere. While a quiet room is preferable, you can also practice visualization while waiting in line at the store or while sitting in a traffic jam.

### **BASIC VISUALIZATION EXERCISE**

Picture yourself:

- Walking into a room full of people comfortably seated
- Walking to the stage or the podium
- Looking from the stage or podium out at your audience
- Beginning your speech or presentation
- Seeing the audience sitting quietly and attentively and looking at you as you speak
- Making eye contact with a pleasant face in the crowd, perhaps someone you know
- Concluding your presentation and walking from the stage or podium
- Hearing them applaud
- Feeling a sense of calm at having completed your presentation

(Hint: After you visualize this scene from your perspective on the stage or podium, picture yourself from the perspective of your audience, as though you are watching yourself on tape.)

Add more details each time you do this exercise. For example, add more details about how the room looks, the size of the audience, or any materials you will be using.

Repeating this visualization several times will make the mental experience more comfortable and familiar. This will carry over into your real presentation, keeping you calmer and more relaxed.

### **SIMPLIFIED VISUALIZATION EXERCISE**

In case the previous exercise seems too intimidating at first, begin with a simpler version.

- Picture yourself standing up in front of two or three people you feel very comfortable around—friends, your spouse, your children—and telling them what you have to say. Don't present your material—just talk to them. If it's easier, start with all of you seated, then picture yourself standing up as you talk.
- Now add on a few more people that you know. Again, just talk to them. The more you can liken the situation to more casual communication, the less nerve-wracking a speaking engagement will become.
- See them looking at you as you speak. Picture them smiling, even laughing as you make a joke.
- Picture yourself completing what you have to say and sitting down, feeling relaxed and good about having spoken.

## **POSITIVE VISUALIZATION**

A standard and very popular relaxation method, known as positive visualization, can be done almost anywhere. It works well if you can let yourself get lost in your visual imagery.

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- Select a peaceful, quiet place such as a beach or a park.
- Picture yourself in that place and very clearly visualize each of the elements around you—sand, grass, breeze, scents, and so on. Focus on each detail of the setting, letting all of your senses take in the imagery.
- If you see something that doesn't belong, simply take it out of the picture.
- After a few minutes, tell yourself it's time to leave, and slowly open your eyes. Sit for a minute looking around. You should feel much more relaxed.

Positive visualization has helped numerous speakers, athletes, and performers. In fact, some people are said to be so good at it that they can visualize themselves on a beach and, when they're finished, walk away with a tan.

## Preparing to Speak in Public

Planning and preparing for any type of public speaking engagement can make a world of difference. Very few speakers can truly wing it. The better you know your topic and the better prepared you are to present it, the more comfortable you will feel. The fear of making a fool of yourself will greatly diminish as you gain confidence in your ability to present the subject matter. You may even come to look forward to speaking in public.

### *Planning*

Architects have blueprints, chefs have recipes, and teachers have lesson plans. Speakers too should have some kind of plan whether it be an outline, an overview, or a summary in whatever form makes you most comfortable.

Presentations will vary greatly depending on the audience, subject matter, and occasion. Someone making a toast at a wedding reception, a person making a presentation in front of the board of directors, and someone conducting an orientation for new college students are going to be taking very different approaches.

Before you begin planning your presentation, you need to ask yourself two questions:

1. Why are you speaking?
2. To whom will you be speaking?

Later we'll look more closely at different types of speaking engagements.

### **REASONS FOR SPEAKING**

So, just what is your reason for speaking?

- To persuade
- To inform
- To resolve a problem
- To entertain
- To debate
- To motivate
- To demonstrate
- To honor, pay tribute to, or present an award to someone
- To introduce or welcome someone or something

- To accept an honor or award

## **GETTING TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

The more you know about the people you will be speaking to, the easier it will be to tailor your presentation. Therefore, you will want to get an idea of who will be in your audience.

For example, a speech at a retirement dinner for a colleague will likely be in front of people who know a great deal about the guest of honor. This allows you to make relatively subtle references to the honoree's habits or traits. On the other hand, at a sales presentation to introduce a brand-new product, you will have to explain the product in detail. Audiences often have a basic level of familiarity with the subject of your presentation but are there to learn new or specific details.

To determine whether you need to start with the basics or can dive right into more advanced details, ask yourself:

- Does your audience know a fair amount about this topic, or is this an introduction to the subject?
- Will your audience be composed of specialists, or will it be a general audience?

To determine their level of interest and enthusiasm ask yourself:

- Are audience members here solely by choice, or were they sent by their employer, for school credit, or for some other reason (such as a court ordered parenting class)?
- Will they be there for the entire presentation, or will audience members be coming and going throughout the presentation?

To determine the level of language to use and, more importantly, what common reference points to include, ask yourself:

- Is the group of a similar age and similar level of education, or is it very diverse?
- Do audience members have a common interest?

If you are speaking in an effort to persuade others (such as a political speech or rally), ask yourself:

- Is the audience made up primarily of supporters, opponents, or both?

- Is the audience well informed on the topic?

Answers to the above questions will help you prepare for your speaking engagement. Do some research on who will be attending. If you are in front of an audience and not sure who is sitting out there, you might ask a general question or two in order to determine who is out there and what they know. You might even tell a joke (a tasteful one, of course) to see how they respond.

## **THE AUDIENCE DOESN'T HAVE TO LOVE YOU**

One mistake too many speakers make is trying to please everyone in the audience. The truth is, it simply can't be done. If you speak before a hundred people and one dozes off while two others walk out, you cannot take it personally.

In most public speaking circumstances, the majority of your audience will be rooting for you to succeed. If not, they're likely to be, at worst, indifferent. This is not a reflection on you; it may simply mean that people have other things on their minds. For that matter, the person who walks out when you are speaking may have just realized that if he doesn't leave at that moment, he'll miss the last train home. There are many reasons why audiences respond as they do—just don't take them personally.

Part of preparation is telling yourself, "Not everyone will love me...and that's okay." Even the finest actors and speakers of our time have received bad reviews. It happens!

Some people will not want to like you from the minute you are announced because of the mood they are in on that particular day. On the other hand, others may love you not because of anything you've said but because you remind them of someone near and dear to them or because they love your choice of shoes. You cannot possibly address all the reasons why people like or dislike a speaker. The best you can expect from an audience is respect, which means that they remain quiet unless some response is warranted.

Whatever you do, just remember they don't have to love you!

## **CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE**

While you cannot be all things to all audience members, you can make some effort to connect to your audience (however the larger the crowd, the harder this is to do). Politicians try to do this in obvious ways by taking on the look of the crowd in a respectful way (such as wearing a certain kind of clothing), eating ethnic foods, and so on.

For instance, when speaking to young children, using exaggerated expressions and gestures can help one hold their attention. Sharing an anecdote that the group specifically relates to can work well. For example, if you're speaking in front of a group of veterans, an anecdote from your days in the military may go over quite well. If you are speaking to

college students, you will likely want to take a more casual approach, while doing the corporate thing calls for an entirely different sort of presentation.

The more you speak in public, the more easily you'll be able to adapt to your surroundings. From your choice of words to your choice of clothes to your body language and gestures, you'll learn to give the people what they want.

## ***Getting Organized***

No matter how much research you may need to do, in the end you will want to narrow it all down to 3-by-5 index cards.

First write down your objective—why you are speaking—and prop the card in front of you. You might even want to keep this on a sticky note.

Next, brainstorm about ideas you could present to your audience, and write each on a separate card. After you have come up with many possible ideas, sort the cards into four piles:

- 1) Ideas you definitely want to talk about
- 2) Ideas you may talk about if you find enough information or have enough time
- 3) Ideas you can eliminate or may use only if trying to stretch
- 4) Ideas you will eliminate

Once you've sorted your ideas, take the ideas you most want to use and conduct research on each of them. Even if you think you know all about a topic, it can't hurt to look up some of the latest developments or find a recent article from which to quote. Of course, the less you know about a topic, the more you need to research. Being unprepared makes public speaking infinitely harder. And audiences can usually tell pretty quickly if they know more about the topic than you do.

### **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESEARCH**

Primary research refers to data that you generate yourself, through surveys, questionnaires or interviews. Secondary research refers to material you gather from books, magazines, newspaper articles, or the Internet. You can use either or both.

### **IMPORTANT ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE**

To make any type of public speaking more informative and enjoyable, try to include some of the following elements:

- **Facts and figures.** Make sure they are accurate and current. Double check your sources, especially if they're from the Internet. And unless you're running for political office, try hard not to bend the truth.
- **Quotes.** Make sure quotes are accurate, and attribute them to the correct sources (explaining who they are if they aren't well known). Bartlett's Familiar Quotations and other collections of quotations are prime references. But don't overdo it. This is, after all, supposed to be your speaking engagement.
- **Stories and anecdotes.** The longer the presentation, the more effective stories or anecdotes will be, since they break up the speech. Keep them concise, and make sure it's clear why you included a particular story or anecdote in your presentation.
- **Examples.** Instead of stories and anecdotes, you may simply cite examples to clarify what you are talking about.
- **Jokes.** Use only humor that's appropriate for your audience—the joke about the two nude sunbathers may not be the one to tell at a church social. If you're using a joke from a joke book, try to find one that you don't think everyone has heard a million times. If you've written an original joke, try it out on a few people before using it—jokes can be very hit-or-miss.
- **Props.** Unless you need a prop for a specific demonstration, use props that are easy to explain and are manageable. Also, keep in mind the size of the room. Steve Martin used to get laughs by announcing that he was going to do the disappearing dime trick in a 19,000-person arena.

## ***The Anatomy of a Speech***

It doesn't matter if you're speaking for two minutes or two hours—you must have a method to your madness. Make sure your presentation has a specific beginning, middle, and end.

**The beginning.** Establish your reason for speaking early on, for example:

- “Tonight I'm going to explain the benefits of the new XL2 super-ultra-micro-mini computer chip, which you can see here on my thumbnail.
- “I'd like to thank everyone for this great honor...”
- “Sales have been down this quarter, and today we're going to address why that is and find out who is responsible.”

You don't have to state your reason for speaking in the very first sentence. However, somewhere in the early part of your presentation you need to state your purpose. Remember the objective that you wrote down on an index card or sticky note? Incorporate it into a purpose sentence—a concise line that introduces why you're speaking.

- “My purpose is to explain new security procedures that are being put in place around campus.”
- “My goal is to welcome new members to our local community organization.”

You may have a special opening line that precedes your reason for speaking and grabs the audience. Lou Gehrig began his memorable speech upon retiring from baseball with “Today I consider myself the luckiest man in the world.”

Opening lines can be very effective. But somewhere early on, you need to make it clear why you are up there.

**The middle.** This is the guts of your presentation, where you present your key points. Here's where you use the facts and figures you dug up with your research to tell them, sell them, teach them, persuade them, dissuade them, or communicate whatever message you have come to deliver. List all the points you want to cover, and make sure to allot enough time for each point.

**The end.** The longer you talk, the more likely it is that you will need to summarize. Keep in mind that most audience members will remember what you opened and closed with more than anything else. Therefore, make a strong final statement that sums up or enhances your reason for speaking. Many a speaker has saved a mediocre speech with a great final line.

Make sure your audience knows that you're coming to the closing:

- “So, what have we learned here tonight?”
- “In summation...”
- “In conclusion...”
- “Let me leave you with this thought...”
- “And finally...”

Or you may opt for a more entertaining way to signal that your speech is coming to an end:

- “Okay, so you're probably wondering why I've been standing up here rambling for the last half hour.”
- “At this point I've completely run out of things to say, so...”
- “Before they get the hook and drag me off, remember...”

No matter how you do it, plan an ending and try to leave the audience with something they'll remember. Don't just keep talking until someone comes to get you or everyone has left the building.

## ***Practice Makes Perfect***

The only way to improve your speaking is to practice. Rehearsing before a public speaking engagement will help calm your nerves and build up your confidence.

### **BREATHING PRACTICE**

Proper breathing is important for successful public speaking—it helps you pace yourself, it allows you to maintain a steady volume, it prevents you from trailing off at the end of sentences because you are out of breath, and it helps relieve anxiety.

To practice breathing correctly:

- 1) Stand with your shoulders back and your back straight, not leaning to either side.
- 2) Push your shoulder blades back; this will move your chest forward.
- 3) Try lifting your chest slightly while keeping your head straight.
- 4) Let your lower jaw drop naturally while opening your mouth slightly.
- 5) Inhale deeply. You want your first breath when speaking to be a good one, so you can begin with a strong voice.
- 6) Just as you finish inhaling, say, “Good evening. Tonight we’re going to talk about several subjects of interest to all of you,” as you naturally and slowly exhale. You’ll see how the words come out smoothly and clearly as you breathe properly.

### **PRACTICING WITH THE MIRROR**

Although you don't always need to practice in front of the mirror, it is a good way of assessing how you will appear to others as you present your material.

Playing around in front of the mirror can help you loosen up and get comfortable with expressions, body movement, and distractions. This will translate into more confidence when you're up there in front of a crowd.

Try the following:

- 1) Practice the alphabet slowly in front of the mirror. Not that you don't remember it, but you want to become comfortable saying each letter and making each sound clearly. Move those lips.
  
- 2) Practice the first three to five lines of your presentation in several different ways:
  - As stone-faced as possible
  - With a cheerful expression and a frivolous manner
  - While jumping rope, dancing, or moving in any manner
  - While impersonating someone you like, saying the lines the way that person would
  - While making exaggerated gestures
  - With the radio or stereo playing—don't drown yourself out, but give yourself some noise, as there may be some when you are speaking.

Try any or all of the above. The point is to become so familiar with the words and the many ways in which they could be presented that you will be very comfortable with what you are going to say. You'll have recited the words in so many different styles that a natural, relaxed tone will come much more easily. You'll be able to say those lines even in the face of distractions. You'll also have some fun with the presentation, making it much more likely that you'll actually enjoy it.

- 3) Pick the tone that best fits the occasion and practice once more, letting any gestures or movements come naturally. It will be that much easier and probably a lot more fun! Once you've done that, practice again without the mirror.

## **PRACTICING WITH A VIDEO CAMERA**

Practice several times in front of a video camera. Have the camera on a tripod or ask a friend to tape you. Get a full-body shot of yourself, unless you know you will be standing behind a podium. Focus on your words as you speak. Record yourself several times.

When watching the tape, look for:

- Fidgeting with your hair or clothes
- Excessive hand movements
- Toe tapping

- Blocking any visuals you may be using
- Leaning to one side, forward, or backward
- Slouching, especially if you are seated
- Rigid body posture
- Looking off to one side too often
- Looking down when you talk
- Touching your clothes, your body, or the microphone
- Any other distracting habits or gestures

## **GESTURES AND MOVEMENTS**

If you stand there stiff as a board, you will look and feel tense. If you try to script hand gestures, they will look fake and awkward. Therefore, you need to practice freeing up your hands while you talk—ultimately, you will become comfortable using natural-looking hand gestures.

Each speaker will use gestures that fit his or her personality. Typically, an extroverted speaker will make more dramatic gestures, while more introverted speakers tend to use simpler gestures. Nonetheless, gestures should be as natural as possible.

To get comfortable with gestures, you might intentionally use more exaggerated gestures to get them out of your system. Then return to focusing on your words, and allow yourself to use more typical gestures.

You can also practice moving around the stage while speaking. Though your movement will be limited by your surroundings, you don't want to appear to be too stiff.

Find a central point on the floor and mark it with a piece of tape. Then practice walking while you talk. Remember not to stray too far from your mark, and keep looking at your audience as you move around.

## **PRACTICE WITH FRIENDS**

After rehearsing a few times on your own, have a good friend or two listen to you speak. Ask your friends to stand in the back of the room; if more than one person is on hand, have them spread out.

After you speak, get some feedback:

- Are you speaking loudly enough?
- Are you speaking clearly?
- Are you doing anything distracting while talking?
- Are you looking down too often?
- Are you talking too quickly or too slowly?

- Are you talking in monotone?
- Are they getting the general idea of what you're talking about?
- Are your examples clear?
- Do your stories and/or anecdotes help clarify what you're saying?
- Are you asking too many questions?

## **TIME YOURSELF**

Often you will have a limited amount of time in which to speak. Time yourself to make sure you stay within the allotted period. If you use a watch or stopwatch, try not to look at it once you get started—this is distracting and makes the audience feel that the speaker is anxious to leave. Position your watch, stopwatch, or timer so that you can see it without obviously having to look away.

Even if you don't have a specific time allotment, you should get a general idea of how long you will be speaking. The amount of time for presentation will depend on the reason for speaking, the setting, and the number of other speakers.

## **SPEAKING GAMES**

Once you're more comfortable with the idea of public speaking, you may want to try these games to improve your speaking skills. Don't take them too seriously—they're meant to be fun. If you really want to find how you did, try audio-taping yourself instead of videotaping. A video can get you too caught up in watching yourself instead of paying attention to how you sound.

- 1) Write down five subjects of interest to you on five pieces of paper. Throw them into a hat and pull one out. Set your alarm clock or a stopwatch for five minutes, stand up and talk on the topic for five minutes straight. Don't worry if you stammer and stumble a bit, it's just a way of getting used to speaking off the cuff.
- 2) Same as above, except give yourself five minutes to find information and jot down some notes before speaking. While you're speaking, try to refer to the notes as little as possible.
- 3) With three or more people, have one person select a short, prepared piece of material such as a magazine article or a passage from a story. Then give the same material to two speakers to study for fifteen minutes. Each speaker will then present the material (notes are allowed, but no copying of the full text). Anyone who's not speaking serves as a judge, deciding who gave the best speech. Use a ten-point scoring system, with a 1 to 5 points for knowing the material and 1 to 5 points for presentation.

## **Ideas for Instant Public Speaking**

Here are some ideas for practicing instant public speaking:

- Ask a question at a public event, such as a town council or PTA meeting.
- Make a suggestion or ask a question at a business meeting.
- Give a short presentation in a school. Schools love volunteers, and you can speak about your profession or even read a story to a class.
- Give a short toast at a party.
- Take a class and participate frequently.
- Volunteer at a hospital or similar setting to read to disabled children, to the blind, or to seniors in a group setting.
- Join a school or church choir.
- Call a radio talk show.

Any appropriate situation that offers you a few seconds or a few minutes in front of a group of people can be beneficial, as it gives you a chance to prove to yourself that you can speak in front of others without stress. Look for opportunities in which you are with several other people and can speak up—even telling a story at a dinner party is an example of speaking in front of others.

## Helpful Hints

It seems fairly easy speaking in front of a mirror, doesn't it? But you're still probably concerned about the real thing—speaking in public. Let's see if we can alleviate some of your worries by helping you solve several common problems, beginning with the biggest—stage fright.

### *Stage Fright*

Stage fright shows up in many forms. For example, you may experience:

- Sweaty palms
- Dry mouth
- Upset stomach
- Shaky knees
- Increased heart rate
- Light-headedness
- Nausea
- An uncontrollable urge to leave the premises

The physical symptoms you may experience come from the emotional fear that you will get up and fail in front of others. This fear can be very great and very real. After all, there are a lot of stress-related what-ifs being tossed around in your mind: “What will people think of me? What if they don't like me? What if I forget what I want to say? What if I'm boring? What if I sound foolish or stupid? Even worse, what if I look foolish or stupid? What if they mock me or rebut what I have to say?”

In short, we fear that in the brief amount of time in which we stand before other people, we will be captured in the eyes of the audience on a blooper reel that will last forever. It all may seem incredibly scary, but stage fright can be overcome.

First, acknowledge your symptoms—dry your hands, take a drink for your dry mouth. Then sit in a comfortable position and focus on your breathing. Use relaxation exercises to slow a racing head. Remember, you tense the muscles, and then relax them.

The key is not to buy into the physical symptoms and allow them to take over. Remind yourself that these symptoms are not going to stop you from getting up and speaking. They are not going to defeat you.

## IDEAS FOR COMBATTING STAGE FRIGHT

Here are some proven ways to combat stage fright:

- 1) Be very well prepared, and be positively prepared. That means not just knowing your subject matter, but having a positive attitude about your topic. You've got something to say, and you really want to share it.
- 2) Plan for a nonstressful, relaxing period before you speak. You might even develop a simple pre-speaking routine for yourself, as many performers do.
- 3) Rehearse several times in conditions that simulate what you'll experience while speaking—with distractions, in front of other people, and so on.
- 4) If possible, visit the place where you will be speaking. Walk onto the stage; sit in one of the seats and see the stage from the audience's perspective. Get comfortable in the setting.
- 5) Take a few minutes before you speak to be in a quiet place. Whether it's the green room or the restroom, find a place to do some breathing exercises, visualization, and quiet thinking about your topic.
- 6) Watch the audience beforehand. You might even want to mingle as they come in, and get to know a few people. If you do, chances are they will be among your biggest supporters. Start liking your audience, and chances are they'll like you.
- 7) Remember, you do not have to be perfect. In fact, tell yourself you will not be perfect. If you make a mistake or something goes wrong, make a joke about it. Go with the proverbial flow and use humor as a tension breaker.
- 8) Avoid stimulants such as coffee or soda with caffeine. Likewise, tranquilizers will give you more than a southern drawl, and alcohol may cause you to give a performance that you may not remember in the morning, and may not want to.
- 9) Stay in the present. Forget about the piano recital thirty-two years ago that didn't go very well. You're older and more experienced now. That was in the past.
- 10) Remember, 90 percent or more of the people in the audience would be just as nervous as you and would do no better or worse if they traded places with you.

Many speakers and performers put their nervousness to work for them. This means taking that nervous energy and using it to carry you through the presentation.

## ***Starting Your Speech or Presentation***

It's time for the real deal. You walk up to the podium or microphone and you're still nervous. It's time to speak, but nothing is coming out of your mouth. What can you do?

- Look around for a friendly or familiar face.
- If there is a podium or place to put your notes, water glass, or anything else you need, arrange those items.
- Take a sip of water to make sure your mouth isn't dry.
- Make a joke about being nervous.
- Stall for a moment by adjusting the microphone slightly, even if it doesn't really need to be adjusted.
- Imagine that you are speaking to one person. One stand-up comic used to name his audience George and imagine he was just having a conversation with George.

## ***Oops—Can We Start This Over?***

Since one of the biggest fears is that you screw up, why not prepare for the occasional foul-up? A wrong word or slight flub will probably not even be noticed, so you can just keep on going. Larger flubs will require some attention. Johnny Carson, the king of late-night talk shows, would have his writers intentionally prepare lines called “savers” that he could use during his monologue when a joke fell flat.

The larger the mistake, the more you need to acknowledge it:

- Immediately tell yourself, “Oops, I messed up. It happens to everyone.”
- You might step back from the podium or microphone for a second and regain your composure.
- If you're holding the microphone, you might lower it and take a deep breath, then continue with something like; “As I was trying to say...” or “Let's try that again.”

- Unless something goes so seriously wrong that you need to stop speaking and call for assistance, you can usually laugh it off or make a joke.
- Sometimes an action will break the tension. Note, however, that if something draws the audience's attention away from you, such as a waiter dropping a tray of drinks at a dinner party, then you need to stop, make a comment, and essentially meet the audience at the point of their attention—in this case the dropped tray—and bring their attention back to you.

## ***The Importance of First Impressions***

It's a common belief that the first impression you make is critical. And it's true that in the first few seconds, even before you open your mouth, your audience will form an opinion of you, for better or worse. Fairly or unfairly, people rush to judgment.

The reality, however, is that first impressions are somewhat overrated. Many marvelous presentations have started off slowly and ended with a bang. Nonetheless, it's nice to get off to a good start, if for no other reason that it helps you to relax.

### **WAYS TO MAKE A BETTER FIRST IMPRESSION**

- Calm your nerves by visualizing yourself walking out or getting up to speak shortly before it's your turn.
- Take a quick look in the mirror to make sure your hair, makeup, and clothing are as ready to go as you are.
- Arrive early enough to scope out the room and the audience, and then make an opening comment about something current regarding the group you are speaking to or perhaps about the room where you are speaking.
- Walk in with pride and confidence. Keep your shoulders straight, look at the audience, and smile.
- Take a slow, cleansing breath as you approach the podium or microphone.
- Make eye contact from the start.
- Welcome your audience.
- Remember to set yourself up in a positive manner from the start. Keep your feet apart and your head straight but not too stiff.

- If the situation calls for it, an appropriate opening joke or a unique entrance can help ease the tension and make the audience smile.

## ***Memory Tips***

How do actors remember all of the lines of an entire three-act play or movie? They learn it scene by scene. You can do something similar—break your material down into sections or chunks and get to know the key points of each section. Remember, unless you're reciting Shakespeare, in most situations you do not need to memorize your material word for word. No one will know if you go off track as long as you remember your next important point and get back on track soon.

- 1) Break your material up into manageable parts. Look for changes in your subject matter or logical points to break it up. Mark each segment, or maybe even highlight it.
- 2) Associate key words or phrases with chunks of material.
- 3) You may also insert stories, anecdotes, or jokes accordingly.
- 4) Practice several times using your cards and key words. In time you won't need them, but you'll still likely keep them around as a form of reassurance.
- 5) If you find yourself going so far off on a tangent that you need to call AAA to get back on the road, go for your notes. You may want to stall for time as you find your place.
- 6) Remember to make sure your notes are in the proper sequence.
- 7) It is always acceptable and quite common, to take out material to read if you are specifically quoting from another source.

Use any memory prompts that you feel can help you. Just try to make your presentation flow smoothly, whether reading or from memory.

## ***Making Friends with the Microphone***

The bigger the room, the greater the need for a microphone. The modern microphone may be cordless, but it still needs to be handled with care—feedback does not enhance a presentation.

Follow these tips to make sure you get on a friendly basis with your microphone:

- Always make sure the microphone is turned on. The switch is usually on the side near the mouthpiece.
- Adjust a standing microphone to your height. Hint: Put one foot on the base as you adjust it.
- You should hold the microphone six to ten inches away from your mouth. If possible, do a sound check before the audience arrives.
- If you take the microphone out of the stand, the stand does not need to be there—move it to one side.
- If you're holding the microphone, try to keep your arm straight, with the elbow down.
- Clip-on microphones should be fastened to your clothing and then ignored. The same goes for the type of microphone that hangs around your neck. Be careful not to fidget with your clothes or any object near the microphone—it may pick up the sounds.
- When seated, remember to keep your head straight; the microphone will still pick you up.

### **THE MOST COMMON MICROPHONE MISTAKES**

- 1) Looking as though you're going to eat the microphone. You don't need to hold it extremely close to your mouth to be clearly understood.
- 2) Not believing the microphone is working when it is. Don't tap on it.
- 3) Gesturing with the mike in hand. No one will be able to hear you if the mike's three feet away from your mouth.
- 4) Believing a microphone is overly powerful. It usually won't pick up questions from the audience.
- 5) Not adjusting the mike properly. Position it so that you don't have to stretch or bend to reach it.
- 6) Being afraid of the mike. Don't stand so far away from it that it won't pick up your voice properly.
- 7) Forgetting the microphone is on. Be careful what you say!

## ***Dressing for Success***

From the red carpet outside an awards ceremony to the hallway leading into the boardroom, people are looking at what you wear and how you look. Therefore, a neat, clean, well-groomed appearance is to your advantage, unless you're fronting a punk rock band.

### **TIPS FOR DRESSING**

- Unless the occasion calls for it, don't wear clothes that are louder than your speech.
- Coordinate so that you don't blend into the background.
- Don't wear anything that can jingle.
- Don't wear something for the very first time on the day of your presentation. If you want to wear a new outfit, try it on and wear it for a while in advance—you want to feel comfortable.
- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Women, if you are going to be seated on stage, be conscious of the length of your skirt.
- Men, remember to wear a tie clip if you're going to take off your jacket.
- Don't wear anything you might be prone to fidget with. Also, empty your pockets before hitting the stage...two pounds of change in your pockets can be distracting.

Most of the time, you will want to dress a notch above the audience. Therefore, if the audience is wearing sport jackets or blazers, you might want to go for a suit. If they are dressed casually, you might opt for somewhere between casual and dressy. It doesn't hurt to keep up with the latest fashions.

## ***How to Use Humor Appropriately***

Inserting a little humor into your presentation can relax an audience, brighten up your speech and make it more memorable, and build your confidence...so as long as your jokes work. Humor, however, can be a tad bit tricky. So stick to the suggested guidelines below:

- 1) Unless you're doing a comedy routine, plan to use humor sparingly.

- 2) Plan your humor ahead of time. Even the best comedians are well prepared. This isn't to say you can't ad-lib on occasion, but don't depend on it.
- 3) Humor needs to fit the crowd. The slightly tasteless joke you heard at work is probably not the one to tell in front of the PTA or your church group. Also forget the inside jokes unless you're sure everyone in your audience is an insider.
- 4) Think of reference points. A joke about a typewriter probably won't work in front of a sixth grade class because they may not even know what a typewriter is. Ask yourself, "Will they know what I'm talking about?" Many speakers have bombed when using the wrong material for a given crowd.
- 5) An excellent rule of thumb is that you cannot joke about a minority or ethnic group unless you are part of that group. Even then, make sure you're not stepping over the line of good taste.
- 6) If you choose to tell a funny story or anecdote, make sure you clearly set the scene. Don't just assume they know the details and jump to a punch line.
- 7) It helps if you're enjoying the story or the joke you are telling. Smile.
- 8) Puns and riddles typically do not work.
- 9) Try to work humor into your speech so that it flows. Don't blatantly announce an upcoming joke with something like "And now I'd like to tell a joke."
- 10) Focus on humor that people can relate to from everyday occurrences.
- 11) Don't be afraid to tell a funny story or joke about yourself. You do not need to be self-deprecating, but it's okay to laugh at yourself.
- 12) If a joke doesn't get a laugh, just keep on going. You can comment on the joke not working, but never get upset with your audience if they didn't laugh at what you thought was a great line.

Humor is definitely tricky. It is a fabulous way to break the tension, but you still want to maintain your credibility. Therefore, you have to know when it fits and when it does not belong. Too many speakers have tried to force a joke in when it isn't the right time or place. Sprinkle humor into your presentation like a chef adds seasoning to a dish.

## ***Selecting the Right Word Choice***

As you prepare your presentation, you need to think very carefully about the words you will use. Many people like politicians, news broadcasters, and radio personalities have gotten themselves in trouble for failing to select their words carefully. For that reason, they then spend an inordinate amount of time correcting and explaining their previous statements.

So then, how do you choose what to say?

- **Use conversational words.** Whether you are speaking at a formal or informal gathering, you want to speak naturally. For example, “Within the past several days, it has come to our understanding that there has been some discourteous conduct displayed by a portion of our student community” sounds far more awkward than “We have recently learned that some of our students have been behaving poorly.”
- **Consider your audience.** Will they understand your choice of words and phrases? An audience of medical practitioners will understand more complex medical terminology than a general audience. Likewise, teens speak their own language.
- **Consider the formality of the gathering.** If people are paying \$1,000 a plate for a black-tie dinner, they’ll expect higher-priced words.
- **Try to avoid using slang, dude.**
- **Double-check and triple-check that your wording won’t offend anyone.** While you can’t guarantee that no one will be offended by what you say, you can try to be politically correct.
- **Make sure that you are consistent.** If you said you didn’t have a relationship with an intern in your opening statement, then don’t turn around and say you might have had such a relationship a few minutes later.
- **Select words that are inclusive of your audience.** Speeches that have too much emphasis on I, me, or my can become quite self-indulgent and alienate your audience. Instead you might use phrases like “We can all benefit from...” or “You’ve probably all seen this type of thing before.” Even a rhetorical question such as “How many of us use deodorant every day?” can hook the audience.
- **To repeat or not to repeat?** It can be awkward if the speaker uses the same word repeatedly for no apparent reason. On the other hand, a catchphrase or buzzword can be effective. You might also repeat a word or phrase for emphasis. For

example: “We need to get involved in our children’s education! We need to get involved in local planning issues! We need to get involved in our neighborhood cleanup!”

- **Avoid words you have a hard time pronouncing.** Tape yourself and listen closely. If you find yourself saying “ax” instead of “ask,” you need to work on your pronunciation, or find another word.
- **Don’t use words you don’t understand.**

## USING TRANSITIONS

Have you ever noticed how some speakers are able to move from one subject to another so smoothly that you didn’t even notice the transition? On the other hand, you’ve probably seen speakers who get so lost trying to make a transition that they practically need to send up flares to find the next topic.

Making a smooth transition is a key part of public speaking. Smooth does not always mean unnoticed or subtle. If the audience is taking notes or they are there for the purposes of learning or training, you’ll want them to pay careful attention to the fact that you are talking about something new.

Here are some ideas for making transitions flow smoothly:

- Use a bridge or connecting word or phrase, such as “In addition,” “Meanwhile,” or “Let’s also consider...”
- Telegraph points from a list: “Our first topic is...” “The second point we want to discuss is...” This is not subtle, but it can be very effective when making a presentation or when teaching.
- Insert a short phrase.
- Ask a rhetorical question.
- Use movement. You might walk out from behind the podium or sit down on the edge of the desk when starting on a new subject.
- Take a momentary break for questions: “Before I continue, does anyone have any questions?” Note that asking for questions is effective only if you take a couple of questions and save the rest for the end of the talk. Otherwise, you’ll lose your continuity completely.

Be careful not to use the same transition repeatedly. Some people use the same word, such as *anyway*, *so*, or *okay*, every time they move on to something else. Awkward repetition gives the impression that you didn't plan very carefully.

## ***Good Posture and a Positive Personality***

The manner in which you are standing can convey your energy level and enthusiasm. Posture and body language is an important part of public speaking, thus special attention is needed.

- Shoulders back and chin up indicates confidence and makes it easier for you to project through deep breaths.
- Looking down or slouching gives the impression that you really don't believe in what you're saying.
- Sitting can be tricky. Dangling legs look awkward and a bit childlike, which is adorable if you are four years old, but not if you're forty-five. If your feet don't reach the floor from a fully seated position, then perch on the front portion of the seat and put one foot flat on the floor.

In a small, casual gathering you can sit back more comfortably. But always remember to sit up straight. Sit well back in the chair with your feet flat on the floor. Or if it makes you feel more comfortable and will help you avoid the temptation to tap your toes, cross your legs at the ankles. Don't cross your legs higher up as it tends to lead to foot wiggling or playing with shoes or socks.

Sitting tends to cause people to take more shallow breaths and thus to speak more softly. Keep this in mind and don't let it happen to you. Remember to take in a good amount of air and project yourself.

- It's okay to rest your hand or arm on a podium, desk, or table, but do it so that you look relaxed and informal while maintaining good posture. Note that leaning does not mean slouching. And don't hang on too tight, or your audience will see that you are nervous.

## **EYE CONTACT**

Too often speakers lose their audience because they are not establishing a rapport with them. Making eye contact with your audience will help solve your problem by enhancing the lines of communication, especially as you begin your presentation. It also gets the audience involved, and projects confidence and a sense of authority.

Conversely, looking away from your audience projects insincerity and conveys a sense that you don't really care if they are listening or not. So don't spend too much time staring at your notes or at the microphone.

Practice making eye contact while talking with friends. Be careful, however, not to stare. If you keep your gaze fixed on someone for twenty seconds, that person will become a little uncomfortable. And if you stare at someone for two minutes straight, he'll probably get a restraining order against you.

To emphasize a point, you may lean toward or even step toward an audience member.

Look for a friendly or interested person. Ask them a rhetorical question, smile, make them part of your speech.

It is important to note that the larger the audience or the brighter the spotlight, the less likely it is that you will actually be able to make eye contact with audience members. Nonetheless, you want to look at the people you can see. Choose a friendly looking person in the middle of the audience, not in the first row, otherwise the people in the back rows will be looking at the top of your head.

## ***How to Effectively Use Props***

Props or visuals of any kind can enhance certain presentations and destroy others. If you are doing a corporate presentation, leading a training session, or conducting a demonstration of some type, props—anything from a flip chart to a prototype of a product—may enhance your speech. In the middle of a commencement speech or at a political rally, on the other hand, a prop might seem awkward. Know the crowd and the occasion. Then make sure that whatever you want the audience to focus attention on is being included for a good reason.

- If your prop is large, such as a flip chart or chalkboard, position yourself to the side and be careful not to block anyone's view.
- Face your audience, not your props. Talk to people, not to objects.
- Reveal your visuals only when you're ready to refer to them.
- Stop talking when you write on a chalkboard or flip chart. When you're done, turn back to the audience and continue speaking.
- When you're done referring to a visual, turn your flip chart to a blank page to move the attention of the audience back to you while you continue talking.

- Handheld props can sometimes help you illustrate a point. Use them sparingly and hold them at about chest level.
- Depending on the room and the equipment provided, have screens or other major props to the side of the stage, not in the middle. This way you maintain center stage and remain the audience's main focus.

## ***Don't Forget to Breathe***

Sometimes a two-second pause while speaking in public will seem to last forever. However, it's worth it if it makes your presentation more effective. Pausing at the right time can:

- Provide your audience with a moment to digest the information (this is particularly helpful when teaching or presenting new information)
- Allow you to catch your breath or to gather your next thought
- Allow you to change topics more easily
- Help you emphasize a point

Comics typically pause before a punch line momentarily to help emphasize the punch line to follow. Other speakers will pause after a key point in a story to make sure it sinks in. Don't be afraid of the silence.

## ***Add Some Feeling***

Very often it is not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference between a so-so presentation and a great one. Consider the various ways in which you can say the following sentence and the difference in meaning.

- "I think this presentation will be valuable to everyone in attendance."
- "***I*** think this presentation will be valuable to everyone in attendance." The emphasis means the speaker is going out on a limb to imply that this is his or her personal opinion.
- "I ***think*** this presentation will be valuable to everyone in attendance." The emphasis signifies that the speaker isn't certain about the value of the presentation for the group.

- “I think *this* presentation will be valuable to everyone in attendance.” The emphasis states that this specific presentation, as opposed to others, has value.
- “I think this presentation *will* be valuable to everyone in attendance.” The emphasis signifies that there has been some doubt about the value of the presentation.
- “I think this presentation will be valuable to *everyone* in attendance.” The emphasis here implies that some might doubt the value of the presentation to all present.

Clearly, emphasis matters. Emphasize not only with your words but with your expression and gestures.

## ***Get Moving***

Are you too stiff on stage? Is someone from a museum building a glass case around you? If so, then it is time to start moving!

Movement helps the audience stay attentive while helping you stay relaxed. After all, your muscles start to tense up if you stand in one position for a long time. If you are limited by a lectern or podium, try moving off to the side if possible when you are trying to make an important point.

Other tips:

- Always face the audience as you move.
- Draw your audience in by moving forward—it makes it seem as though you are talking to them more personally.
- Remember to stay centered when moving around—you don’t want to give your presentation to only one side of the room.
- Don’t overdo it. A little movement can enhance a presentation. But pacing back and forth can become distracting.

## ***Controlling Your Hands and Arms***

Many speakers are more comfortable at a podium or lectern because it blocks their lower body and provides a place to rest their hands.

A microphone stand also gives you someplace to put your hands. However, it doesn't look natural or relaxed. If you're not comfortable holding the microphone, place one hand on or behind the stand to keep yourself centered. Leave the other hand free for gesturing. Hold on gently to prevent feedback.

Suggestions for taming your limbs:

- Hard as it may be to do, keeping your arms loosely at your sides makes it easier to gesture and harder to fidget or distract the audience.
- Gently holding your hands in front of you at your waist can be a comfortable alternative and still allow you to make hand gestures as you talk.
- When you have a wireless microphone or are mikeless, you still need to figure out what to do with those arms. Putting your hands in your pockets makes you look as though you are nervous or trying to hide something.
- The hands-on-the-hips posture gives the impression that you are either waiting for someone or are annoyed.
- Keeping your hands behind your back makes it look like you're either hiding something or ice-skating.
- Crossed arms make you look disinterested and your audience will pick up on this.
- Wringing your hands will make your audience as nervous as you are.
- Some speakers hold a drink or another object. However, if you are going to hold something other than a drink or note cards, chances are it will draw attention, and you will therefore need to mention it.
- Arms hanging straight down can cause you to drop your shoulders. Don't forget to lift your arms to gesture.

## TYPES OF GESTURES

- ***Descriptive*** gestures help you clarify your words, help create a visual image, or define a measurement: "It wasn't this big in the catalog!"
- ***Emphatic*** gestures emphasize a point or a need, such as for unity: "To win this election, it is up to you."
- ***Suggestive*** gestures present a thought, idea, or emotion. For example, you can easily convey that you don't know the answer.

- **Prompting** gestures are used to get a specific response from the audience: “Let’s hear it for John Clark!”

Face it, most of us talk with our hands. Unless you’re driving, it really does help the communication process. When speaking in public, gestures should be (or at least appear to be) natural and spontaneous. Gestures should be made with the arms away from the body. Arms held too closely to the body will make you appear uncomfortable or robotic.

Be careful not to gesture with the hand holding the microphone. And try to avoid using the same gesture over and over again. Repetition can become monotonous.

This is somewhat a Catch-22—you want to practice making unrehearsed, natural gestures, which is, of course, a contradiction.

## ***Body Language—Is Your Body Saying More Than Your Mouth?***

Have you ever been accused of saying something without even opening your mouth? Sure you have—it happens all the time. From flirtation to fury, body language can speak volumes with the use of any actual words. In fact, studies at the University of California have shown that as much as 55 percent of a speaker’s influence comes from his or her body language. So what exactly is your body saying?

- If your posture is somewhat slouched and you have your hands in your pocket, you are probably conveying the message, “I really wish this was over.”
- Crossing your arms or puts your hands on your hips could be saying to your audience, “I don’t really care what you have to say, but go ahead and ask your stupid question.”

The more you speak in public and the better prepared you are, the more you will become aware of what your body is saying.

- If you’re sitting in a chair, but look as if you are lying on a sofa, your body is saying, “I don’t care about this!”
- If you’re sitting straight up in your chair, smiling, and making good eye contact, you are letting others know, “I’m interested.”

- When standing straight up with your arms to the side, shoulders back, and smiling, you're body is telling others, "I'm confident and ready to tell you something."

## ***Dealing with Questions***

When responding to a question, focus your attention on the person asking the question, but don't exclude the rest of the audience entirely. After you hear the question, look around the room to see if the other audience members took in the question. If there seems to be any doubt, repeat the question. The bigger the room, the more important this is.

Typically, you will have control over when questions may be asked. Often a speaker or presenter will make it clear that they will field all questions at the end. If you've already done that, stick with the game plan.

Some suggestions for Q & A sessions:

- Direct the microphone, if you are using one, to the person asking the question, but only if you can get close enough for it to pick up what the person is saying.
- Prepare in advance for some commonly asked questions on your topic.
- Call on audience members from different parts of the room.
- Answer the questions in a concise manner if possible. Try to avoid going off on tangents.
- Set up a stopping point. You can indicate how many more questions you'll take, or state clearly that this is going to have to be the last question.
- If the person asking the question is right in front of you, you might opt to move a few steps away while still maintaining eye contact. This helps eliminate that one-to-one feeling that alienates the rest of the room. You'll notice that talk show hosts do this.
- If you are on a panel or there are other speakers, don't feel obligated to answer every question unless it has been directed at you.
- If you know people have different viewpoints that differ from yours, be brave and let them ask questions.

If you're not sure of an answer, let them know that you'll find out the answer later. You might also pose the question to the audience. This is perfectly acceptable, provided you don't do this with every question—which indicates that you were not prepared for a Q & A session.

## ***Introductions***

Sometimes if you want something done right, you need to just do it yourself. This is very true when it comes to a proper introduction. From mispronouncing the name of the speaker to neglecting key credentials, introductions have gone awry many times over.

Write out your own introduction clearly and give it to the person introducing you several minutes before you are scheduled to speak. This will afford enough time for the person to read it through a couple of times, but not enough time for him or her to lose the card.

### **WHAT TO WRITE**

Your introduction should be:

- **Brief.** You don't want an introduction that is longer than the speech.
- **Easy on the ears.** Don't try to dazzle them with a title like “resident co-executive associate director of therapeutic linguistic diagnostic intervention.”
- **Applicable.** If you're about to address a Little League team, the fact that you have a master's degree in labor economics and industrial relations is probably not relevant and doesn't need to be mentioned.
- **Current or recent.** Unless your claim to fame was childhood stardom, stick with your most recent accomplishments.

## ***Keeping the Audience on Their Toes***

Have you ever been sitting in an audience and noticed that one or two (or more) people were starting to dose off? Have you ever been one of those people? How do you keep your audience awake? Easy—you dazzle them, include them, surprise them, and keep them on their toes.

Besides juggling flaming torches or swallowing knives, you can grab an audience's attention in numerous ways:

- In a small crowd, you might get audience members involved in the presentation.
- Give away inexpensive but appropriate items that go with your presentation.
- Vary your tone and pitch. Even shout at some point if it helps and is appropriate.
- Shift positions or move to a different location if possible.
- Do something unexpected.
- Find a new way to present old material.

You should also respond to the needs of your audience. Are they dozing off because it's too hot? Ask someone to open a window. Are they having trouble hearing you? You may need to speak louder or have the volume on the microphone turned up. Perhaps after listening to you discuss new payroll tax accounting methods for two hours they need a break. Give them one...and black coffee.

## ***Last-Minute Checklist***

Before you arrive at the podium, run through this last-minute checklist to make sure you haven't forgot anything:

- Check your outfit—can you move comfortably? Are you having a wardrobe malfunction? Is your zipper down?
- Make sure you are not wearing any noisy jewelry or other items with which to fidget.
- Have your flip chart, PowerPoint presentation, chalkboard, and other props all set up.
- Check your hair and teeth.
- Remember to wear deodorant with antiperspirant.
- Make sure you have your notes and make sure they're in order.
- Did you give whoever will introduce you your introduction?
- Focus on shoulders back, head up, eyes out to audience.
- Remember to breathe as you speak.

- Speak clearly and not too fast.
- Don't forget that pauses are good things.
- Allow yourself a moment to relax and gather your thoughts.
- Think positively: You can do this!

## Types of Presentations and Speeches

In this chapter, we will look at the specific components that make up each of several types of public speaking situations.

### *The Toast*

The toast is a short ceremonial tribute, a heartfelt moment of celebration and honor. It can be a lyric, a poem, an anecdote, a recounting of some significant moments involving the honoree, or a simple memorable line. It only needs to reflect the moment, the person, the theme, and express sentiment or goodwill.

**Preparation:** If you know ahead of time that you will be giving the toast, you should write down several key attributes about the person or people being honored. Think of a tasteful, possibly funny story that, in the end, displays a positive attribute of the guest of honor. If you are honoring someone at a tribute dinner, retirement party, or birthday celebration, list several of the person's achievements and accomplishments. Then narrow down your list to those that best exemplify the individual or his or her role on a team. Toasts should be brief and touch the audience in some manner—make them laugh, make them cry, but most of all make them think about the honoree. Remember, it's about the person being honored, not about you.

If you are toasting a couple at their wedding, think of how they met or what they've said about one another. Often a best man or maid of honor will include in the toast a few one-liners about the couple—make them tasteful and don't journey into questionable territory (for example, if the bride or groom had a one-night stand with the stripper at their bachelor or bachelorette party).

Toasts should always be uplifting. They should always end on a sincere note, and you conclude by raising your glasses and taking a drink.

**Tone:** Cheerful, upbeat and sincere. Display a good feeling about the honoree in your manner, and dress to honor them.

**Presentation:** The toast is your way of leading a roomful of people in a celebratory moment. You want to use that moment to capture the audience's attention and share it with the honoree(s).

Talk to both the audience and to the honoree. Be eloquent. Don't rush the toast—let your audience have a moment to laugh if you're telling a joke or humorous story. Then pause before the final sincere moment and end with "Here's to ..." or "Let's drink to..." Raise your glass as you finish. Whether you speak for ten seconds or two minutes, make it memorable with the right words and the right sentiment,

**Final thoughts:** Toasts are a great way to practice speaking in public because you can do a sincere thirty-second toast and then sit down.

## ***The Acceptance Speech***

The acceptance speech is a way of saying thank you to those who have honored you in some way.

**Preparation:** Prepared remarks should acknowledge those who are responsible for our receiving the honor. Be humble and be gracious, but do not belittle your accomplishments or apologize for them.

If you are one of many people receiving awards, you need to be brief. Create a short list of people to thank, and begin thinking of other remarks you want to make. Quoting someone of stature might help you describe your feelings about this accomplishment. You may choose to briefly state what the award means to you or how you got to this point. Time yourself, and trim down such comments by eliminating unnecessary words or lines.

Should you be speaking at a dinner specifically in your honor, you will be expected to speak for a longer period of time, in which case you can tell the story of how your work came to be honored. Again, seek out the highlights and include a relevant anecdote or two. Speak about what this award means to you, but remember to be humble, and don't overuse the word I: "Then I did this, and then I did that, and I, I, I, I ..." You may acknowledge others in the audience who have played an instrumental role in your reaching this moment.

If you are being honored or accepting an award, you have done something to reach a certain plateau of excellence or have benefited a business or a community by your work. Whether it's providing a college with the funding for a new gymnasium, topping all salespersons in your company for the past year, or devoting hundreds of hours to helping abused and neglected children, you are in a position of respect. Preparing, therefore, means appreciating and passing on the knowledge or experience you have learned or gained.

**Tone:** Fit the tone and language to the situation. Don't be persuasive if this is a lifetime achievement award. A joke or two at your own expense is okay. Conversely, you need not make a tear-jerking acceptance speech if you've received a trophy for winning a pie-eating contest. The occasion should warrant an informal conversational tone combined with your own personal sentiment.

**Presentation:** Your body language should exude pride, not arrogance. Remember, keep your head straight, not in the clouds, and walk with confidence, but not with conceit. Shake hands or hug whoever is handing you the award, and take a moment to gather your thoughts when approaching the microphone.

Should be elected or appointed to an esteemed position, whether it is a local political position, president of the PTA, or grand poobah of your moose lodge, you'll need to thank those responsible for helping you reach this position, and address what you hope to accomplish while in office.

Remember, be humble, be sincere, talk slowly and with confidence—and try not to make promises that you can't keep.

## ***Giving a Sales Pitch: Being Persuasive***

Whether you're trying to sell a product, a service, an idea, or a campaign platform, you'll need to learn how to make a persuasive argument if you want members of your audience to take a desired course of action.

**Preparation:** Know your subject area well. You can't sell what you don't know. Do your research and get behind what you are trying to convince others to buy or do, whether it's a product or an idea.

You also need to know the demographics of your audience. Know their age range, their interests, and their attitudes. How much do they know about the subject matter? Do they have strong opinions? Are you introducing them to a new idea or trying to bring about a change in a conventional way of thinking? The more information you can gather on the mind-set of your audience, the easier it will be to prepare your persuasive argument or sales pitch. Keep in mind younger people are often more easily persuaded to make a change or try something new than an audience of older people, who may be set in their ways.

Prepare a strong case for why the audience should act the way you would like them to. Include the strengths of your product, service, or idea. Explore potential negative responses in advance and have answers ready. Most importantly, people want to know what's in it for them.

**Presentation:** You need to be convincing and radiate confidence without appearing arrogant or cocky. You need to be forceful, but know when to pull back and show some vulnerability or add some humor. Audiences today are wise and won't take kindly to a pitch that sounds like the stereotypical used-car sales approach.

Accentuate the positives; be upbeat and use examples, studies, case histories, and research to back yourself up. Persuasive words and phrases such as "save you time and/or money," "improve," "proven," "will see results," "healthier," or "safer" can be useful.

Be approachable. Selling means talking to people, not down to them or at them. If the audience has grasped the concept, then move on. Use gestures and movements to hold their attention and emphasize your key points. Remember, to persuade doesn't mean to beat them over the head with your idea.

Save some material for a question-and-answer session. This lets the audience participate, and such interaction gets them involved in the program. Watch your audience. If they're tired, bored, busy, too hot or losing interest, take a break. It's very hard to persuade people who aren't in the mood to be persuaded—just think about the calls you get at dinnertime from telemarketers.

**Final thoughts:** If you make something sound too good to be true, people will start to have doubts and will very likely back off.

## ***Speaking on a Panel***

If you're asked to speak on a panel, usually the discussion is on a topic with which you are familiar. Panelists generally make statements to present information, join in a general discussion, and/or field questions on the topic.

**Preparation:** In some cases you will be introduced. In other situations you may be asked to introduce yourself, meaning you'll provide your name and title on the credentials that landed you on the panel.

If each panelist is afforded a few minutes to speak, prepare your remarks to fit within the given time frame. Notes are always helpful. Tailor your remarks to fit the discussion. Since others will be speaking and may cover some of your intended speech, prepare a couple of alternate routes that you can take so as not to repeat the previous speakers. You should also prepare to answer the most commonly asked questions on the topic.

**Tone:** A panel discussion usually takes on a professional tone, where you are being called upon to demonstrate expertise in a particular field. Even if you disagree with other

panelists you need to allow them the right to present their material or voice their opinions. It's important to be courteous and respectful.

**Presentation:** Most panels are intended to provide varying views on a topic. You may be one of several people in the same profession providing a specific take on a topic. Listen carefully to what is being said by other panelists and how they respond to questions. Try to present a distinctive voice rather than just reiterating what others have said. Remember that unless the question is directed at you, or unless you have an important point to add, you do not need to answer every question posed to the entire panel. Too many repetitive answers or statements can slow a panel discussion down.

While you may be addressing the audience, you can refer to what other panelists have previously said by gesturing. Often panelists stay seated and speak. Try to sit up and be the visual focal point of the panel when you are speaking, answering a question, or listening to a statement directed toward you.

**Final thoughts:** A good panelist needs to be a good listener, since this is a group setting. Don't dominate the discussion, and don't forget positive body language, even when you are not speaking.

## ***The Roast***

A roast is a humorous variation on the old tradition of toasting an honored guest. The popular New York Friars Club, frequented over the years by numerous great comedians, made roasts famous, and they continue as an entertaining type of tribute.

**Preparation:** Combine what you know about the honoree with research and make a list of his or her most intriguing, fascinating, unique, or quirky accomplishments and characteristics. Then select those that are best known to the audience and try to present them in a funny manner, whether it's in joke form or story form. You can introduce some new information, provided it's not too personal and fits the individual.

Prepare a speech that flows from one thought to the next. Even individual jokes need a common theme—put them together under subheadings, such as Bob's love for golf, his incessant need to be neat, the fact that he's still driving a fifteen-year-old car, and so on. Know the boundaries, however. If Bob's supervisor is present, it's probably not a good idea to mention that he really hates his job.

Use comedy-writing basics to create your speech. Take real stories and embellish them to emphasize your points. Use exaggeration—"Bob is so compulsive that he....." You might also take stories from the news or from an organization to which the roastee belongs and guess how this person would act in a given situation.

Test your speech out with someone who knows the honoree to make sure that the references can be understood, that nothing crosses the line, and that your material is funny.

**Presentation:** A roast usually follows a set formula in which each speaker is allotted a certain amount of time. Listen to the previous speakers and be ready to do a little last-minute editing so that you won't say the same thing as the person before you. After all, you're all writing on the same topic. Sometimes a simple prop can help. Time yourself when you rehearse, and allow for some extra time for laughs.

The dry humor of a roast usually means that you approach the event in the manner you would a tribute, with a somewhat serious demeanor. However, you'll want to emphasize your punch lines, which sometimes means a brief pause before them. No matter how you deliver your lines, make sure they are clear and that you give the audience a moment to digest a joke. If you talk right through the laughs, the audience will miss the jokes.

Look at the audience and occasionally at the honoree. Also gesture in his or her direction.

**Final Thoughts:** Have fun up there. Ride the wave of the other speakers if the mood is already boisterous. However, if the speaker ahead of you bombed, then try a new approach, perhaps being louder, more uplifting, or more boisterous.

## ***Master of Ceremonies***

The master of ceremonies is the facilitator of the evening's festivities. A good MC can stay in control of all that is taking place and hold the attention of the audience—which may mean keeping them awake after a humdrum presentation or stalling while a late-arriving performer gets their act together. It may also mean announcing when dinner is served, leading the pledge of allegiance, introducing the house band, or even letting the owner of a purple Volkswagen know that the car's lights are on. In other words, it's a busy job, but someone has to do it.

**Preparation:** As master of ceremonies, you need to be very familiar with the program for the evening. You need to have as many details as possible to keep everything running smoothly.

An MC also needs to know what to say and when. This includes introducing each speaker or presenter and ad-libbing when necessary. The best way to prepare is to have a copy of the evening's program and develop remarks for those times when you will have the opportunity to speak. Keep your remarks in the spirit of the evening. For example, a light-hearted introduction may fit a roast or a ceremonial dinner but would be inappropriate at an event paying tribute to the victims of a disaster.

Use discretion, and make sure you have the proper title and pronunciation of each person you will introduce. If possible, talk with speakers or others who will take part in the program and confirm what they will be doing, and how much time they will be on stage.

**Tone:** Most MCs also have to serve as cheerleaders for the evening's upcoming events. This means making everything that is coming up sound important, interesting, or entertaining. As an MC, you should be likable and convey warmth, sincerity, and decisiveness. Let the audience know they can count on you.

**Presentation:** Start by introducing yourself and noting why you are gathered together for the evening. The MC should not be the center of the attention but a central point of focus. It is you they turn to for order. MCs have been known to be the bright point in a dull presentation or put a jolt into a slow-moving program. Make sure to provide a strong introduction for each speaker or guest.

Two common mistakes new MCs make are drowning someone's introduction rather than projecting it, and announcing someone and then walking away. Always speak clearly, and after you introduce someone you should lead the applause and wait until the speaker gets to the microphone before leaving.

An MC needs a strong stage presence. This means making eye contact with your audience, and sometimes communicating with them. If you talk with audience members, keep tight control over the conversation, do not relinquish the microphone, and don't let the conversation go off on a tangent. Expect the unexpected. MCs often have to deal with any problems that may occur. While it's hard to prepare for the headliner showing up late, a sudden rainstorm, an air-conditioning system that doesn't work, or a sudden swarm of bees, it's part of your job to deal with whatever happens.

**Final thoughts:** Show up early so you can find out about any last-minute changes in plans—there are always a few. Make sure the speakers, presenters, and/or performers have arrived, and double-check your introductions. Finally, try to stick to your planned routine, while keeping your eyes and ears open.

## ***Making a Rebuttal***

Sometimes you have time to prepare for a response, and other times you'll have to talk based on your gut reaction. When responding before an audience, make sure your audience knows what you are responding to.

**Preparation:** If you have time to prepare a response, you need to carefully read or listen to the previous arguments or statements and list the points to which you most want to

respond. Remember, you should be responding to the ideas or arguments that have been presented, not attacking the people making the argument.

The longer the body of material you are responding to, the more you will need to reiterate specific points. For example, when the party not holding the presidency responds to the State of the Union address, the speaker is careful to cite specific points in the speech before responding to them—this serves as a guide for the audience. If, however, you are responding immediately, without much time to prepare, you should select only a few key points. Don't try to respond to everything that has been discussed. If possible, take notes while the speaker is talking.

**Presentation:** Take your time and be deliberate. Even in a timed debate, you're better off making valid points slowly and with strong emphasis than trying to pack a ton of information into a narrow time slot and making little sense while doing so.

Emphasize your key points. Get arms and hands into action as you speak. If you are asked to respond and you generally agree with what's been discussed, then try to add a valid point of information. Build on what's been said—don't just agree or rephrase an earlier speech. If you disagree, don't let anger or emotion overshadow good judgment. Remember that sometimes your body can respond before you even open your mouth.

Leave the audience with your strongest point of agreement or disagreement, and if you have enough time, summarize briefly before you are finished.

**Final notes:** A good response or rebuttal is usually like a hard, well-placed return in tennis—you make a significant statement that takes some of the wind out of the sails of the initial speaker or presenter. You want to put the ball deep into their court so that they will need to think defensively, or in this case respond rather than attack.

## ***The Welcome Speech***

The welcoming speech is typically given to start off a program, conference, convention, or similar type of event. Your job is to set the tone for the event.

**Preparation:** Typically, you'll have a few minutes to welcome everyone and make a few remarks. Make reference to the occasion, and say something appreciative about the group responsible. Depending on the nature of the event, you might make a couple of appropriate jokes that fit the occasion. An appropriate anecdote may also fit nicely. Know your audience.

Be sincere in the greeting: "It is an honor to welcome the graduating class of 2007." "It is a very special privilege for me to introduce tonight's marvelous program."

You'll also want to welcome those in attendance, make reference to the reason you are all gathered together, and perhaps provide a brief overview of what will follow. Depending on the nature of the group and the event, you might choose to prove some facts about the location, the organization, or the festivities to follow.

**Presentation:** Upbeat, energetic, and with a little pizzazz is typically the way to start off most programs. Know your time frame (usually a few minutes) and, like an MC, be prepared with an introduction for whoever will follow you.

Often you will find yourself in the awkward position of trying to welcome everyone while they are still talking, finishing dinner, or finding their seats. Go slowly, speak up, and try to connect with your audience. In some cases they will be immediately attentive, while at other times you'll have to talk through interruptions as you draw them into the event.

**Final thoughts:** Sometimes a welcome speech may be basically fluff, but it is flattering fluff that ultimately makes people feel good. And since your welcoming remarks will often be the first impression that sets the tone for the entire program, try not to open with "I've had a really, really rotten day..."

## ***The Tribute Speech***

From a retirement party to receiving the Nobel Prize, speeches of tribute or honor are significant milestones for the honoree.

**Preparation:** First and foremost, know the person being honored. Do some research, talk to other people who know the guest of honor, and build a theme that fits this person. And make sure your facts and stories are accurate! There's nothing worse than talking about the honoree's heroics in World War II only to find out later that he fought in the Korean War.

While you don't want to pour it on to the point where you embarrass the honoree and make the audience queasy, you do want to highlight the accomplishments that have made this person the recipient of this special tribute. Showcase the honoree's virtues without overdoing it. Tell stories that demonstrate his or her key attributes, rather than just listing them; mix touching stories with humorous ones and inspiring ones. If you are one of several speakers, you can pick one thing to discuss, such as the honoree's career in business, her love of sports, or her collection of antique dental instruments. Go with a theme. If, however, you are the one and only speaker, try to cover the different sides of the honoree with an emphasis on what he or she is being honored for.

Write material that comes from the heart, and remember as you put your remarks together that this is not about you. In essence, a tribute is an extended toast.

**Presentation:** By looking at the audience and at the honoree, through your gestures, and of course through your words, you can reinforce the connection between them, serving as the middle person. Be sincere and deliberate in your manner. Let yourself sound as if you're breaking from your prepared speech to tell a story about the honoree. The story may actually be part of the speech, but it seems more informal if you come out from behind the podium or change your demeanor to a more casual manner, as if to let the audience in on a more personal side of the honoree.

Talk long enough to arouse emotions from the audience but not to the point where you are repeating yourself. Also listen to the stories that the other speakers share so you do not repeat their stories about the honoree.

End with "Congratulations," "Best wishes," "God bless," "We're going to miss you," "We all love you," or some such closing statement.

**Final thoughts:** Don't overdo it, but don't under do it either. Often highlighting your relationship with the honoree is the best route to go, since it can include both personal and professional memories.

## ***The Meeting***

While there are one-on-one meetings, in this case we are referring to meetings with a roomful of attendees. Meetings are an excellent place for honing your public speaking abilities, since most of the people on hand are wrapped up in their own personal reasons for being in attendance and wondering when there will be a lunch break.

**Preparation:** The goal of any meeting is supposed to be to accomplish something, whether it's a new sales strategy for a Fortune 500 company or deciding on how to best run a church bake sale. Therefore, you need to focus first on that goal.

If you are running the meeting, you'll need to prepare an agenda that includes all of the necessary items to be covered that evening. You'll also need to do all the preparations, such as finding and securing a meeting location, making sure there are enough seats, inviting all necessary attendees (too often people are asked to attend meetings that they have no legitimate reason to be attending), arranging for refreshments, and overseeing all other necessary arrangements. You'll want to plan the seating arrangement to optimize effective communication. For example, a circle might be better than rows of chairs if it's to be a brainstorming session.

Additionally, you'll need to script your opening remarks, setting the tone, introducing the subject matter, and explaining what you hope to cover. You'll also want to introduce newcomers and take a moment to hand out any necessary materials. Prepare all of this in advance.

If you are attending a meeting, know why the meeting is being called, and do some research if necessary. Speak up on topics you see in the agenda that you have an opinion on or specific ideas about.

**Presentation:** If you're running the meeting, be sure to follow your agenda, and try to stick to your timetable. Restate all key points and be as professional as possible, meaning:

- Always be courteous.
- Stay on topic and don't go off on tangents. Also, never gossip about people who aren't there.
- Make sure to speak up, and double-check that the people in the back of a big room or a room with poor acoustics can hear you.
- Look at all of the attendees as you talk.
- Use movement and gestures to keep it interesting.
- When it's time for others to participate, try hard to include everyone—don't let a few people dominate the meeting. If people are going way off on tangents, look for a way to chime in and reel them back in.

If you are attending a meeting, speak up when called upon or join in when brainstorming. Speak as if you are talking to the person farthest away from you (though you don't need to look at that person); this way you will project. If it will help you be heard, stand up or at least sit up.

While speaking, look at the various people in the room, not just at whomever is leading the meeting or at your boss. You don't want to direct remarks to one person, nor do you want to ignore everyone else. Make concise points, and then turn the meeting back over to the leader. Have an end to your comments clearly in sight whenever you start to speak.

**Final thoughts:** There are books written about planning and conducting meetings. Participating in a meeting is a great way to build confidence in your public speaking ability. You have the bonus of being completely in control of your time element, meaning you can speak for five minutes or five seconds, depending on what you have to say and your level of comfort.

## ***In Front of a Class***

Technically speaking, you do not need to be in front of a class to teach. There are many situations in which we impart knowledge and provide training. Presenting reports, giving demonstrations, and even running a show-and-tell session are all informative speaking engagements.

**Preparation:** Unlike a persuasive speech, where you are trying to elicit an action, in the informative speaking situation, you are simply trying to present information in a clear manner that can be understood by your audience. If anything, you are trying to stimulate learning.

As with other types of presentations, you need to know your audience. In this case, your concern is their level of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. This will tell you at what level to start. Are you teaching basic math or advanced calculus? An advanced training program will presume a greater level of knowledge about the subject.

Use a variety of reference sources, including books, magazines, the Internet, and interviews, to help you gather your materials. Then develop a logical sequence to explain the information. Use quotes, charts, graphs, surveys, handouts, visuals, or anything else you need to support and enhance your presentation.

Start off simply and gradually move on to more complex materials. Don't assume what the audience knows. Have the backup data available should you need to fill in the blanks or answer any tough questions.

**Presentation:** Many leading experts know a great deal about their subject of expertise but have a hard time teaching or explaining the material to other people. We've all met very smart people who cannot teach. The problem is often that the individual doesn't know how to look at the topic from the perspective of the audience members. You've probably come across someone who knows the ins and outs of computers but can't help you repair yours because he or she is speaking in "computerese" and you're not fluent in that high-tech language.

It helps to present information in increments, modules, or sections, which explains why teachers' lesson plans are divided up into discrete parts. It allows the audience to digest information in comfortable doses. The more complicated the material for a specific audience, the more you will need to slow down, pause, reiterate, and take breaks.

A good teacher knows how to read the faces and expressions of his or her students. When trying to inform, you need to have a sense of how much information is getting from your mouth into the minds of those listening. You need to know when they've stopped listening.

**Final thoughts:** Talk to your audience before launching into the material. If you can establish a rapport, it becomes easier to teach. Answer questions that are general in scope and save more specific or detailed questions for after the class, session, or demonstration.

## ***Television Appearances***

If you are going to be appearing on television, you've made the big time. Congratulations! Television is a powerful medium. You need to be very well prepared and well rehearsed if you're going to make a good impression. After all, the camera does not lie.

**Preparation:** First, you want to dress correctly. The camera can add several pounds, so avoid the doughnuts in the green room before going on, and if you have slenderizing clothes, wear them. You also don't want to wear complicated patterns or bright colors that will distract the audience. Solid colors and pastels work well. Don't wear anything that will reflect the bright lights, including shiny jewelry. While you want to look good, you also want to dress in a manner that is camera-friendly.

Watch the program you will appear on in advance. Get familiar with the tone of the show. Unless you are in an acting role with a prepared script, you will likely be there to answer questions in an interview. In some cases, you will be able to suggest the questions, and in most cases you will know what you will be asked to talk about.

Prepare short answers that are conversational, informative and entertaining. Practice beforehand so that you articulate your answers clearly. In addition, practice sitting up or standing in a comfortable position with your shoulders back, yet not too stiff.

**Presentation:** Limit hand gestures, since they may not be on camera, but don't forget facial expressions as they may be accentuated through close-ups.

Make eye contact with the interviewer as you respond, but don't stare. Keep your body and head facing the camera. Be aware of which camera is on—note the red light on top. If you are speaking directly into a camera (for example, taping a public service announcement or making a charity drive appeal), look at the camera as if you were talking to another person.

Be careful not to focus on your image on the monitors; your eyes need to be on the camera. Keep your eyes relaxed—don't stare, and don't squint even if the lights are bright.

Since the camera can get closer to you than your typical audience, touching your face or fidgeting in any manner can be that much more obvious. Be conscious of positive body language. Remember that you will breathe better and speak better if you are sitting up.

While it is not your responsibility to make sure the show is running on schedule, you may need to be aware of time cues.

If you are on television for promotional reasons, make sure to present your message clearly, and reiterate where and when your audience can buy it, sell it, or see it.

Should you be presenting information, which could include giving a demonstration, be personable, upbeat, and confident in what you are teaching or explaining. Unless it is your show, you'll need to talk to both the host and the camera.

Also remember that entertainment value is part of the lure of television, even on informational and educational programming.

**Final thoughts:** Don't play with the microphone. Don't fidget. Don't swivel in the chair if you are seated. Don't use words that cannot be said on network television. Wear makeup—both men and women. Also, make sure your hair is just as you would like it to be. If needed, ask for help with hair and makeup.

## ***Speaking on the Radio***

Although looks and gestures are not factored into your radio appearance, every little um, ah, or unnecessary noise may sound like a ton of bricks falling down.

**Preparation:** In several ways, speaking on the radio isn't like public speaking because you are not literally speaking in front of the public. The act of sitting behind a microphone in a small studio and talking is far less intimidating than staring out at an audience that is seated before you. However, the reality is that you may be heard by a very large audience, many of whom are ready to change the station if you are too boring.

To prepare for radio, you need to write out your presentation and practice until you are smooth.

While you can read from a prepared script, unless you're reading news or advertising copy, you'll want to have a more natural, conversational manner. Therefore, you'll want to paraphrase your own words or speak from notes or index cards.

If you're in a group setting, you want to avoid talking over others. Signaling is allowed. Typically, the flawless sounding talk show is the end result of a lot of preparation and experience in the medium. Even someone like Howard Stern does plenty of preparing for a show and works closely with his staff.

Use audiotapes to listen to yourself and see if you can eliminate unnecessary utterances between key words or phrases. Also try to be aware of words you use over and over, and cut them way back. You should do this before any type of public speaking, but especially for radio, where all you've got to work for you is your voice, and the occasional sound effect.

Work on pronunciation and correct word choice: It's *ask*, not *ax*; *hundred*, not *hunred*; *nuclear*; not *nuculer*; and *regardless*, not *irregardless*.

**Presentation:** The sound technician will be responsible for getting the right level for your microphone. Arrive early enough to get used to talking and hearing yourself while wearing a headset.

Be aware of the time factor. Like television, radio typically works on a tight time schedule. However, unlike television, you can look at the clock or your watch often.

Keep in mind that while no one can see if you slouch, it can affect how much energy you have when you speak. Therefore, you might sit up for better breathing.

Since you can't rely on your good looks and pearly white teeth, you'll have to sound intelligent, entertaining, amusing, controversial, and/or engaging to keep the audience listening. Whether you like him or despise him, Howard Stern is a master when it comes to holding his listeners' attention by building on a theme, no matter how crude and always leading listeners to believe something more outrageous is coming up next. The more engaging you are, the more they'll want to keep listening.

**Final thoughts:** Avoid dead air—always keep talking. Be aware of cues to go to a commercial break or at the end of the program. If you are reading scripted copy, practice it several times and underline words or phrases that you need to emphasize.

## ***Impromptu Speaking***

At a meeting, in a class, or perhaps at a workshop, you may be called upon to speak.

Sometimes impromptu speaking is a blessing in disguise, as you have no time to build up stress and worry. Other times it can be a disaster if you're not paying attention.

Remember the time when the teacher called on you when you were trying to sleep in chemistry class?

**Preparation:** The best preparation for impromptu speaking in a group setting, such as a meeting or classroom, is to be a good listener. Follow the discussion and formulate ideas and opinions just in case you're called upon.

If you are asked to step up and speak on a topic or fill in for someone who is absent, you'll want to take the first few moments to stall while gathering your thoughts. Thanking the audience for coming and letting them know how pleased you are to be speaking are simple ways of stalling while you decide what to say.

Don't apologize and tell them you're not prepared. Understand that the audience does not expect you to produce something like Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech. They simply expect you to do your best under the circumstances.

Use your few seconds of preparation (or stalling) to think of three key points on the topic. Then think about why the audience is here and see if you can meet their needs in some manner. Do they want to learn something? Are they here to be motivated?

One way in which you might structure an impromptu speech is to use a chronological approach to talk about the subject, such as:

- When you started at the company
- The present state of the company
- Where you see the company going in the future
- Ideas you have for change or progress

**Presentation:** If you weren't supposed to speak, then no one will be expecting anything from you. Therefore, the pressure is off.

Take a deep breath, speak slowly and deliberately, and focus attention on being enthusiastic and upbeat. You'd be surprised at the little amount of substance you need if you are truly likable. While you may not want to say it aloud, keep telling yourself, "They like me—they really like me!"

It is most imperative in these circumstances that you rise to the occasion by telling yourself not to panic. In some cases, if you just relax and let your thoughts unwind, you can actually get on a roll and talk for several minutes on a subject. You may find that you did well up there but can't remember anything you said. Impromptu speaking can be exhilarating.

**Final thoughts:** Remember it's okay to be vulnerable. If you start struggling or fumbling, laugh or make a joke or comment about being tongue-tied. Audiences are usually very forgiving.

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